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Memorandum on Clay Discs called "Spindle Whorls" and votive Seals found at Sankisa, Behar, and other Buddhist ruins in the North Western Provinces of India.—By H. RIVETT-CARNAC, ESQ., C. S., C. I. E., F. S. A. (With three Plates.)

Last year I submitted for the inspection of the Asiatic Society specimens of stone and clay discs, similar to what are called "spindle whorls" by the Antiquaries of Europe, found by me at the Buddhist ruins of Sankisa, Behar, &c. in the Fatehgarh District, N. W. Provinces of India. Certain clay seals stamped with the Buddhist formula found in the same localities were also exhibited. The resemblance between these "spindle whorls" and those described and figured by Dr. Schliemann in his work "Troy and its Remains" was briefly noticed by me at the time. Since then I have obtained some more specimens of these discs and seals, and I think it well that they should be submitted for the inspection of the Asiatic Society, and that the attention of its Members and of other Antiquaries should be directed to the resemblance to be traced between these remains and those found in the ruins of Hissarlik and in many parts of Europe.

First as regards so called "spindle whorls." When we were encamped at Kanouj, Sankisa and Behar Khas in the Fategarh district, the village urchins were encouraged to bring to us everything in the shape of "Antiquities" that could be grubbed out from these extensive ruins and from neighbouring mounds. These sites, as is well known, present many features

of resemblance to those which Dr. Schliemann dug through at Hissarlik, described at length in his work upon Troy. That is to say, it is generally found in the case above-mentioned that the site has been selected on account of some Kunker Hill which, rising out of the flat alluvial soil of the Doab, offers a point of vantage for the building of a fort or city. Here, as at Hissarlik, these sites often bear the traces of several distinct colonies. The mud buildings of one set of colonists have been razed by their conquerors or successors to build thereon houses and temples which have again been levelled to form the foundations of the habitations of later settlers. The high mounds, on which part of the present town of Kanouj is perched, is to be accounted for in this way, and there can be little doubt that if shafts were to be carried through the ruins there, after the manner adopted by Dr. Schliemann at Hissarlik, the traces of several distinct periods might be unearthed. What has been said of Kanouj holds good in regard to Sankisa, Ramnuggur and other ruins. Much has not yet been done to explore these localities, and the recent interesting find of Mitra coins, reported by me to the Society, indicates that careful investigation might prove remunerative to antiquarian research. The heavy rains of India are, however, of much assistance in running amateur sections through the ruins, and in exposing from time to time relics of more or less interest. Amongst these may be classed the "spindle whorls" now to be noticed, many of which together with coins, beads, etc. are collected and set aside by the villagers as possessing some mysterious significance, and are brought out for sale when the District Officer or some occasional visitor camps near the place.

Of these clay discs and their stone prototypes four distinct classes are to be noticed :

A. Terra Cotta Discs, plain and ornamented.

B. Ditto with a hole through the centre.

C. Terra Cottas "in the form of a top and the crater of a volcano" (I use the words of Dr. Schliemann, Troy, p. 38 to describe these peculiar specimens).

D. Clay Balls, plain and ornamented.

With respect to A, Clay or Terra Cotta discs, these were brought to us in enormous quantities, and, if disposed to do so, we might have purchased and carried off several elephant loads of this description of relic. At the time I did not attach much importance to them, and am sorry now that no careful selection was made of those bearing different styles of ornamentation. They are all of red or black clay well baked. In size they vary from 1 inch to 2 inches in diameter and are about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch in thickness. The majority of them bear a rough ornamentation at the edges only, see Plate XIII, sketches 1 and 2. Others again show traces of more elaborate design and workmanship. Some of these are figured in sketches 3 to 7.

On one, No. 5 of my sketch, will be seen the broad arrow noticeable on Schliemann's No. 458. On another, No. 6, is what looks like the sign of Saturn or what Dr. Schliemann calls the "mystic rose," well known on Buddhist coins and in Buddhist art. They all have more or less ornamentation at the edges, resembling the spokes of a wheel or possibly the rays of the sun.

I also obtained at Sankisa several stone discs of nearly the same shape as the Terra Cottas. They are all highly polished. One is of black marble, another of crystal. Several are of red marble, and the material must have been brought from a distance, as no stone save kunkur is to be found within many miles of Sankisa. It will be noticed that all these stone specimens are grooved at the edges, see the section in sketch No. 8, whereas but few of the clay specimens have received such treatment.

Type B, sketch No. 9, on Plate XIV consists of clay discs similar in most respects to the foregoing, save that a hole has been drilled through the centre of each. I did not pay any particular attention to the proportion in which these different classes were brought to me in camp. But I find that I have many more of the plain discs than of those which have been pierced. There can be little doubt, however, that many hundreds of the pierced ones might have been obtained on the spot, and I am sending to ascertain whether any more ornamented specimens are procurable. The specimen marked and figured in sketch No. 10 is of grey granite. It bears the same relation to the pierced clay discs as the stone and crystal discs mentioned above bear to the clay whorls of type A. In the centre is a hole, round which are six concentric circles.

The specimen figured in sketch No. 11, is of a somewhat different type from the foregoing, as a section of the sketch will explain. The impressions of the spokes of a wheel with dots between each spoke appear to have been made in a stamp or mould. I find I have only two of this class in my collection. But doubtless hundreds more might have been obtained had I not been afraid of burdening myself during the march with too large a collection of such specimens.

Of type C, Sketches Nos. 12 and 13, on Plate XIV, which may be described in Dr. Schliemann's words as being in the form of a "top or crater of a volcano" I have, I find, but 4 or 5 specimens; I have little doubt that large numbers were offered to me, but at the time they did not appear to possess any particular significance. It was only in tumbling out a large number of discs from the box, in which they had long been kept, that I recognised this type of the illustrations of Dr. Schliemann's book, just consulted with reference to the Discs A and B mentioned above. The specimens I have with me do not bear any marks of ornamentation. Further search may perhaps bring better specimens to light. (Since this was written some ornamented ones have been found.)

Lastly we have type D, Clay Balls, Plate XIV, sketches Nos. 14, 15, 16, resembling somewhat those figured by Dr. Schliemann. Several of them are roughly ornamented, and the designs, such as they are, will be seen from the sketches.

I hardly know how it happened that these specimens were carried away by me. Certainly no importance was attached to them at the time ; and they would have escaped my notice altogether, had I not seen, when comparing the clay discs, the sketches of somewhat similar balls figured in the last pages of Dr. Schliemann's book.

Lastly, I have also figured two specimens Nos. 17 and 18 which seem to approach type C. And an enamelled glass bead No. 19.

This bead is similar to that figured in Thomas' Prinsep, Pl. IV, No. 13. These beads are found in large quantities together with crystal, onyx cornelian and others at Sankisa and similar ruins. It seems desirable to figure the specimen with this paper in order to ascertain whether similar ones are found in Europe or elsewhere. The village urchins during the rains make a practice of collecting these beads, and they are usually given to *fakirs* or devotees. Seeing such a necklace worn by an old *fakir* led me to enquire whence the beads came. And I had little difficulty in procuring a variety sufficient for about nine necklaces.

I have now to direct attention to the resemblance between the specimens above described and figured, and those discovered by Dr. Schliemann at Hissarlik and noticed at great length and figured in large numbers in his well known work upon Troy.

As regards type A, clay discs more or less ornamented, without the central hole, I cannot be quite certain that this type was found by Dr. Schliemann. I do not see that any distinct mention is made of unpierced discs, and it is not quite clear from the sketches in Dr. Schliemann's work, whether, what is referred to as the Central Sun on the Discs figured in plates 22 and 23, is a hole drilled through the centre or is a depression or ornamentation representing the sun. Still, even if this particular type was not found at Hissarlik, it is found in Italy, and, as will be shewn further on, the resemblance between the remains found at Hissarlik and those of Italy is referred to by Dr. Schliemann.

Dr. Schliemann writing of his discoveries at page 187 of his work above quoted, thus refers to the discs :

" During the last few days we have also found, in the strata next above the primary soil, at a depth of from 46 to 36 feet, a number of round brilliant black terra cottas of exquisite workmanship ; most of them much flatter than those occurring in the higher strata and resembling a wheel ; many are in the shape of large flat buttons. But we also meet with some in the form of tops and volcanoes which differ from those found in the higher strata only by the

fineness of the terra cotta and by their better workmanship. The decorations on these very ancient articles are, however, generally much simpler than those met with above a depth of 10 meters (33 feet) and are mostly confined to the representation of the sun with its rays, or with stars between the latter, or of the sun in the centre of a simple cross, or in the middle of four or five double or treble rising suns. At a depth of 6 meters (20 feet) we again found a round Terra Cotta in the form of a volcano, upon which are engraved three antelopes in the circle round the sun.

"At a depth of from 5 to 8 meters ($16\frac{1}{2}$ to 26 feet) a number of terra cotta balls were found, the surface of each being divided into eight fields; these contain a great many small suns and stars, either enclosed by circles or standing alone. Most of the balls, however, are without divisions and covered with stars; upon some I find the swastica and the tree of life, which, as already said, upon a terra cotta ball found at a depth of 26 feet, had stars between its branches." (Schliemann's *Troy*, p. 187.)

The above extract embraces not only the so-called spindle whorls, but mentions the volcano-shaped "whorls" of type C found at Sankisa and type D brought away by me from the same place. The discs were found by Dr. Schliemann of terra cotta, of marble and of crystal. So at Sankisa did we find clay, marble and crystal discs.

A comparison of the Plates appended to Dr. Schliemann's volume with the specimens submitted by me and the sketches which accompany this paper will, I think, shew that there is at least some resemblance between the remains found at Hissarlik and those at Sankisa.

On nearly all these discs will be seen what are constantly referred to as the spokes of the wheel or the rays of the sun. I have placed side by side with my sketches a copy of the whorl engraved by Dr. Schliemann at page 137. It might fairly be taken to be a representation of the whorl given in Plate XIV, Sketch 10 appended to this paper.

Then my collection is unfortunately in no way large or complete. When at Sankisa, I had little idea of the significance of these remains or their resemblance to well known types, and I only purchased a few of them in the manner that I collect everything that seems to be unusual or strange. Further search may possibly bring out even more remarkable points. The few specimens that I have succeeded in obtaining bear, however, a resemblance, not only in shape, but also in ornamentation, to those figured by Dr. Schliemann, sufficient to render the subject interesting. The broad arrow of my Sketch No. 5 and the Mystic Rose or sign of Saturn, or the numeral four of my Sketch No. 6, are all to be traced among Dr. Schliemann's specimens; and then again on the balls some similarity in ornamentation is to be traced.

It would perhaps hardly be right to attach much importance to the

fact, that one or two clay discs were found in Buddhist remains in India, and that discs of somewhat the same type were unearthed at Hissarlik. But here we have, not only pierced discs of type B, but the Volcanoes C and the Balls D, all three types resembling in some degree the three types of Hissarlik and all three types bearing somewhat similar forms of ornamentation.

Again it is to be noticed that the remains at Sankisa are undoubtedly Buddhist. Sankisa as is well known was a celebrated place of pilgrimage, being sacred as the spot at which Buddha is supposed (as described by General Cunningham, Vol. I, *Archæological Reports*) "to have descended from the Trayastrinsa heaven by the ladder of gold or gems, accompanied by the gods Brahmá and Indra."

The place was visited and described by the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian early in the 5th century, and by Hiouen-Tsang in the 7th century A. D. A detailed account of these interesting ruins will be found in General Cunningham's *Archæological Report* above alluded to.

Now the ornamentations on the Terra Cottas of Hissarlik, if they are not Buddhist, certainly bear a close resemblance to the ornamentations on coins, buildings, etc., which in India are generally supposed to be Buddhist.

Thus the wheel continually recurs in Schliemann's sketches, together with the Swastika. And what Schliemann calls the Mystic Rose, and Ferguson the Trisul ornament is quite as frequent. The Sacred Tree, the Fire Altar and the Deer are also almost as common. In fact, we have every one of the Buddhist symbols of the well known type of the so-called Buddhist coin, figured in No. 1, Plate IV, Thomas' Prinsep, and of which an engraving is given at page 17 of Fergusson's *Indian and Eastern Architecture*. Mr. Fergusson points out, however, that there is some doubt whether these symbols really are Buddhist, and at the page above referred to, writes, "One coin of the period is well known. It belongs to a king called Kunanda or Krananda generally assumed to be one of the nine Nandas with whom this dynasty closed. In the centre on one side, is a dagoba with the usual Buddhist Trisul emblem over it, and a serpent below it: on the right the sacred Tree, on the left the Swastika with an altar (?) on the other side a lady with a lotus (Sri ?) with an animal usually called a deer, but from its tail more probably a horse, with two serpents standing on their tails over its head which have been mistaken for horns. Over the animal is an altar, with an umbrella over it. In fact a complete epitome of emblems known on the monuments of the period, but savouring much more of Tree and Serpent worship than of Buddhism as it is now."

Dr. Schliemann at page 38 of his work refers to the resemblance between the Terra-Cottas of Hissarlik and those of Italy. This directed my attention to Gastaldi's work. The following extract will show that if it be considered that the resemblance between the remains at Sankisa

and Hissarlik is not established, such doubt can hardly exist regarding the Indian and Italian remains.

Gastaldi says: "There are very many of these objects, for the greater part of Terra-Cotta, more or less discoidal, or conical, or spheroidal, pierced in the centre, to which the Archæologists of France and Germany, as well as our own, have given the name of spindle-whorls. The paste of the spindle-whorls is not, for the most part equal to that of earthenware; instead of the grains of sand, we find powdered carbon and ashes; the colour is ashy in the internal parts, and ash colour varying into yellow and red on the outside. Some few spindle-whorls are black, and of a substance probably similar to the thinner vases, and, like a great number of these, are shining externally as if with varnish. They are very various in form; and although eight different ones have been represented by you, from those which, in the course of the summer, we sent from Campeggine, courteously presented by the brothers Cocconi, not one represents the other six, collected in the sequel, in the marl-beds. Some few bear marks scratched upon them, and are among those you have had engraved (Fig. 25).

"Besides all the spindle-whorls of earth, there were dug up from the marl-beds of Castellazzo di Tontanellato, three others, which are cut out of different substances. One was made out of a stag's horn, it is in the shape of a cone, and is very highly polished; the second of stratite, of a greenish tint, and spheroidal; the third, of a whitish limestone (calcare), is disc-shaped, brought to a high degree of polish, and certainly manifests an advanced epoch in art among the people who used such implements. Among the objects in the Museum of Antiquities at Parma, which are of uncertain derivation, there are twenty spindle-whorls, some in limestone, stratite, and even amber, but the greater part of earth; some are polished, some are ornamented with circles, concentric with hole pierced in them, or in concentric lines disposed in groups on the back of the spindle-whorl. We find among these the transition from the more depressed discoidal form, almost medallion (nummulik) to the acute conical. Some one of those in terra cotta is said to have been collected from the ruins of the Roman City of Velicia. The different forms, finish and substances of the spindle-whorls would lead us to suppose that they must have served for various uses in proportion to their diversity; perhaps the most beautiful and carefully worked were amulets, or else buttons; the others weights, used either for nets or in weaving."

"Besides all the earthenware and all the spindle-whorls which we have spoken of, we meet in the marl-beds with other small objects in earth, badly baked, in form disc-shaped, without any hole, sometimes ball-shaped (pallottola), of which it is impossible to divine the use which they served."

(Lake Habitations and Prehistoric Remains in Northern and Central Italy. B. Gastaldi, pp. 44, 45, 46, 47.)

In Italy these mysterious articles are found of clay and marble, as in India. The ornamentation is the same and in Italy also are found the disc-shaped *Terra Cottas without any hole* similar to those of North Western India. It is hardly necessary to burden this paper with any more sketches. The Italian remains are almost exactly the same as those of Schliemann, but I cannot resist the temptation of copying the specimen marked 8 B which will be found figured at p. 45 of Gastaldi's work. It is almost identical with No. 12 of those figured by me.

Next as to the use to which these remains were placed. Dr. Schliemann discusses the subject at length in several places in his valuable work on Troy. And it will be seen that Gastaldi is puzzled as to their significance. Dr. Schliemann arrives at the conclusion that, although some of them may have been used as spindle-whorls, the greater number of them were votive offerings. And Gastaldi considers that some at least were amulets. The symbols on most of those found at Hissarlik would seem to leave little doubt of their religious character. Of the Indian specimens, it is not easy to say why some should have the central hole and others should be unpierced. But, if they are votive offerings, the fact that the pierced ones were found in smaller quantities at Sankisa than those without the hole, may possibly be explained by a practice, which was noticed by me years ago at some shrines of pilgrimage in the Central Provinces. There the pilgrim, when he makes a vow or implores a favour, smears his right hand with red colouring matter, and impresses it, fingers upwards, on the wall of the temple, leaving there a mark like the Red Hand of Ulster. If the favour, the birth of a child or whatever it may be, is granted by the presiding deity, the pilgrim is supposed to return to the shrine the following year, and to impress on the wall a similar mark, the fingers of the hand this time pointing downwards. It was very noticeable that the latter marks were well in the minority, and it was carefully explained by the local priests that this was not to be accounted for by the supposition that the deity was slow in his favours, but that, in truth, the suppliants, when they had obtained what they wanted, were not always mindful to return and to fulfil their vows. Perhaps in this way the proportion of the unpierced to pierced discs may be explained. The unpierced ones being offered when a favour was implored, the pierced ones when it was obtained.

Be this as it may, the view that these discs are votive offerings is supported by the religious character of the symbols, already alluded to, found on the whorls of Hissarlik and Sankisa. Since I commenced to write this paper, I have received a copy of Alabaster's "Wheel of the Law." At Fig. 8 A will be found a copy of the sketch of the Buddhist wheel of the

law given in that work. And it is almost unnecessary to point out the resemblance which the highly ornamented Disc No. 7 bears to this sketch. The other discs, though not so elaborately ornamented, seem to adopt the same idea. No. 11, as far as ornamentation is concerned, undoubtedly resembles a wheel, though, as the section will show, it can never have been used, as some of my friends have suggested, as the wheel of a toy cart; nor indeed are there any marks of wear on any of the wheel-shaped discs to support the view that they were used for miniature playthings of this description. It seems much more probable that they were votive offerings intended to represent, more or less the Buddhist wheel of the law, similar to that stamped on some of the coins recently submitted by me to the Society.

The view that these were indeed votive offerings, and not toy cart wheels or *pachisi* or draughtsmen, as some have suggested, is further borne out by the large numbers of clay discs, of a somewhat similar type, but bearing on them the well known Buddhist formula, found in the same neighbourhood. These seals, as they have sometimes been called, from their bearing a seal-like impress, have been figured by Moor in his Hindu Pantheon and have been described by General Cunningham, by Dr. Rajendralála Mitra, C. I. E. and others. General Cunningham, if I remember right, found large quantities of such "seals" made of lac in the Buddhist ruins of Behar. Though my stay at Sankisa was short, I succeeded in obtaining a considerable number of these seals. Many of them are from the same stamp. Others from different moulds bear the same well known formula commencing "*ye dharma hetavo*." The character of the legend in all these cases is comparatively modern. Those, however, marked 1 and 2 Plate XV bear the formula in the Gupta character. Others again marked 3 to 6 are deserving of notice from the variety of their ornamentation. They would seem all to have been made and stamped, in what I may call, a cushion-like fashion, after the manner of the quaintly-shaped Mitra coins recently submitted by me to the Society. Some of these seals are I think worthy of being figured in the Society's Journal.

There can be little doubt that these so-called seals, bearing the Buddhist formula, are votive offerings. A friend of mine, Mrs. Murray-Aynsley who recently travelled through a portion of Ladakh, brought me thence two stones, one inscribed with a portion of the Buddhist Formula, Plate XV, No. 7, the other bearing a conventional ornamentation. That these stones are offered in the present day, will be seen from the following extract from Mrs. Murray-Aynsley's work entitled "Our Visit to Hindostan, Kashmir and Ladakh," p. 88.

"We there first saw some of the walls called Mánés, which are formed of stones placed one upon the other without any mortar, and are

usually about four feet high, and four feet wide. Some of these walls are as much as a quarter of a mile in length, and are made, we were informed, with the following object. When a Buddhist undertakes a journey, or makes a vow, he chooses a flat stone, takes it to a monastery, and gets a lama (or monk) to engrave some rude characters upon it, which are said to be usually, 'Om mani padme Om,' which has been translated to mean, 'All hail to the jewel in the flower of the lotus!' though some give other interpretations to these words. When his stone is thus prepared, the individual places it on the top of one of these walls, which on their upper surface are almost covered with such engraved stones. Thibetans when passing these walls, always keep them on their right hand, and frequently go out of their direct road in order to do this."

There would seem, then, to be little doubt that the Terra-Cottas, plain and ornamented, and those also bearing the formula of the Buddhist faith, were votive offerings of a by-gone age.

In what little I can do to further the objects of the Society, I generally try to content myself with bringing facts to notice, and pointing out the resemblance between the remains found in India and those discovered in other parts of the world. It must be left to those who are better informed than myself, or who are more fortunate in being able to consult what has been written by authorities on the subject, to determine whether there is any real significance in the resemblance between the remains found at Sankisa and those of Hissarlik and Italy. I am not unprepared for the argument that a knife is a knife all the world over, and that this form of implement must have suggested itself to all people at an early stage of civilisation; and that the fact of implements in the form of knives having been found at Hissarlik and at Sankisa would not be sufficient to establish any connection between the settlers at these widely separated sites. It may also be urged that earthen spindle-whorls might naturally enough suggest themselves to different races situated far apart from one another. But surely there is something more than a chance resemblance in the several types of these remains and the style of their ornamentation? And does not the continual recurrence of, what we call, the Buddhist symbols on the Hissarlik finds, suggest the possibility of Hissarlik and Sankisa having been colonized by branches of the same race, be it Buddhist or not, one of which striking west from some point in Central Asia, found its way to the shores of the Mediterranean, whilst another, taking a southerly course, established itself in the Gangetic valley?

Supplementary Memorandum.

(With a Plate.)

Since writing this Memorandum on spindle-whorls, I have received from Sankisa a further consignment of these peculiar remains.

In my paper recently read before the Society I mentioned that the flat discs, plain and perforated, were to be found in large quantities. I have received a further large consignment. But the perforated ones are much less numerous than the others. It is unnecessary to send any more of these types.

Of what Schliemann calls the volcano-shaped Terra Cottas I have received several more. This bears out my view that they are numerous. Nos. 1 and 2, Plate XVa, are interesting from their decoration. The one it will be seen is decorated on the top. The other is decorated on the base with what would seem to be a flower and in a manner resembling the Hissarlik types.

I send also three more balls, Nos. 3-5. These are ornamented with stars, crosses and with lines. Several others of the same type have since reached me.

I have obtained many more clay seals of the same type as those already sent. One only marked No. 6 is different in its character from those already submitted to the Society.

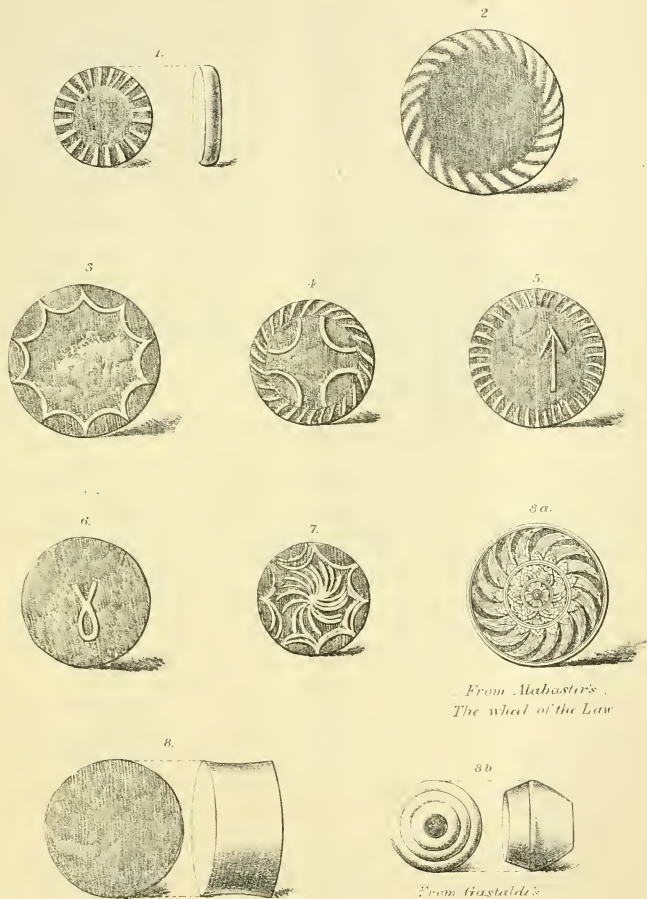
No. 7, is a fragment of pottery highly ornamented with the rosette or wheel of the law, or whatever it may be, common on Buddhist remains.

I should be glad of any explanation of the peculiar piece of soapstone marked No. 8. Its ornamentation is curious. The grooves at the top will be noticed. It may possibly have been worn as an amulet.

Further enquiries are being made at Sankisa, and I hope to be able to obtain many more specimens showing various forms of ornamentation.

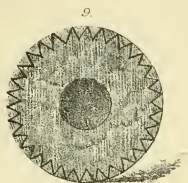
It has been suggested that the curious balls of various sizes with their different markings may have been intended to represent the sun, moon and stars.

I see that the genuineness of the antiquities found at Sankisa and Behar is doubted by some. But these sites do not see on an average one European visitor a year; as yet no one save myself has collected there these specimens, and so it is hardly to be supposed that the native mind has yet been sufficiently prepared to attempt to provide forgeries for a possible future trade in such articles.

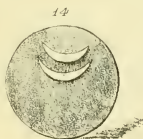
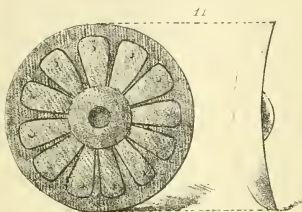
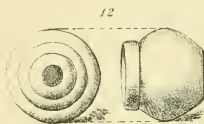


*From Alabaster's
The wheel of the Law*

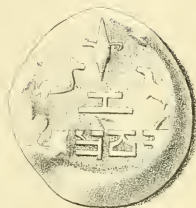
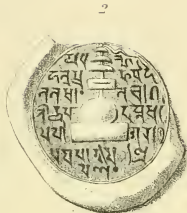
*From Gastaldi's
Italian Antiquities
See No 12.*



10 From
Schliemann.
P. 137.



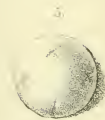
19. Glass
Enamelled
bead



Length 5 inches



All full size except N^o 7.



2



6



3



7



4



8



All half-size

COIN WHORLS ETC. FOUND AT SANNISHT BEHAR
AND OTHER BUDDHIST RUINS

Illustration

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